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Phantasy Star Online

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Phantasy Star Online (PSO) is an online RPG title, originally released for the Dreamcast in 2000, bundled with a demo of Sonic Adventure 2. Another edition, entitled Phantasy Star Online ver.2, was released for Dreamcast the following year. This version was also ported later on to Microsoft Windows, but was only released in Asia.

Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II was later released for the Nintendo GameCube and Xbox in 2002, featuring some added content. Consequently, Phantasy Star Online Episode III C.A.R.D.

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TEEN

T

ESRB

Developer(s)

Sonic Team

Publisher(s)

Sega

Revolution was released for the GameCube in 2003 with a different gameplay formula. Phantasy Star Online: Blue Burst, a port of the Xbox version, was released for Microsoft Windows in 2004 through digital distribution, featuring both Episode I and Episode II, and adding a new Episode IV, NPCs, quests, team system, and server-side saving system.

The Phantasy Star Online titles are a sub-series of Sega's Phantasy Star series of games that began in 1987. With the exception of Episode III, the PSO games themselves are simple hack and slash type role-playing games where the player slays monsters, levels up, buys new equipment, etc. The online Phantasy Stars differ from the previous games of the series by offering a real-time – rather than turn-based – approach to combat, seamlessly integrating this with exploration and plot developments.

Designer(s)	Yuji Naka (Producer)
	Takao Miyoshi (Director)
Artist(s)	Satoshi Sakai (Art Director)
	Akikazu Mizuno (Chartacter Illustration)
Composer(s)	Fumitaka Shibata (Sound Director)
	Hideaki Kobayashi
	Fumie Kumatani
	Kenichi Tokoi
Platform(s)	Tomonori Sawada (Sound Designer)
	Dreamcast, Microsoft Windows, Nintendo GameCube (PSO Ep I&II), Xbox (PSO Ep I&II)
Release date(s)	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none">JP December 21, 2000NA January 29, 2001EU February 23, 2001</div>
Genre(s)	Action-RPG
Mode(s)	Single player, multiplayer
Rating(s)	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none">ESRB: T</div>
Media	GD-ROM, CD-ROM, DVD, GameCube Optical
	Disc

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Phantasy Star Online

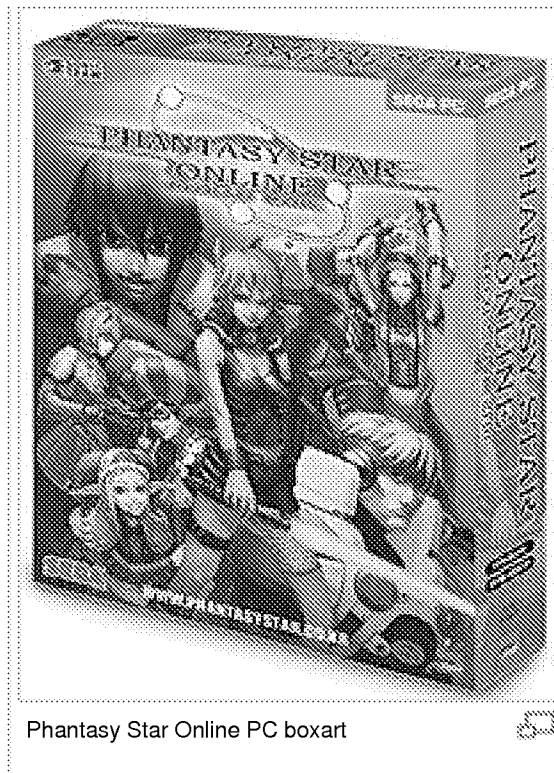
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Communication system

[edit]

Communication between players is achieved via a combination of direct 2-line text entry, *Symbol Chat*, *Word Select*, and/or by keyboard (optional.) As PSO servers support international co-operative play, the *Symbol Chat* and *Word Select* features encourage players to attempt communication with others regardless of language.

Symbol Chat allows the player to define a collection of symbols within a speech bubble,



Phantasy Star Online PC boxart

in order to convey an emotion or simple instruction. These symbols could then be invoked via a player-defined shortcut, or accessed via an in-game menu.

Word Select acts as a limited phrasebook, allowing sentences to be constructed through a hierarchy of menus. Once complete, a sentence is automatically translated into the configured language of other nearby players, thus bridging the language gap encountered in cross-cultural multiplayer games.

Keyboard users can also trigger a number of gestures by holding down the Alt (alternate) key and pressing any letter, number, or function key. Holding down the Shift key at the same time allows players to perform the gestures of the opposite sex, but only while they are in any of the online lobby areas.

The Xbox version (Episodes I & II) also allows voice communication via an Xbox Live headset.

Playable Characters

[edit]

Phantasy Star Online consists of three jobs: Hunter, Ranger and Force. Hunters are adept with close-range weapons such as sabers, two-handed swords, dual daggers, halberds, and are more suited for up-close and personal confrontations. Rangers are best at ranged combat and excel with weapons such as pistols, rifles, shotguns, and machine guns. Forces are the magic class of the game and their skills are far-ranging, from physical and magical attacks on the field to support (strength and defense), magic, and healing for teammates.

There are three races in Phantasy Star Online: Human, Newman, and Android/CASTS.

Modes of play

[edit]

The first two episodes of PSO (excluding the original Dreamcast version prior to the Ver. 2 revision disc) offered the following game modes:

- **Offline Mode**

This is the plot-driven part of the game, in which a player or group of players fight through a number

of levels spread over four distinct areas. Each area has a boss at the end. The four areas are (in this order) the forest, the caves, the mines, and the ruins. Upon defeating the final boss, Dark Falz, the credits roll and in some cases, an extra feature will be unlocked (i.e. the next difficulty mode.)

In addition to the main story, players can also take Hunters' Guild sidequests, which explores the lives of the airships, Pioneer 2s, citizens, and further delves into the backstory behind the game. The rewards for these sidequests include a payment of meseta for the job, the chance to explore the stories behind Pioneer 2s NPC residents, the opportunity to obtain special weapons that can't be found anywhere else (such as the God Hand or Soul Eater), and whatever weapons, experience, and meseta one can get while fighting on these missions.

In Phantasy Star Online, normal mode is available to play at four different difficulty levels. Normal is available from the start, while Hard, Very Hard and Ultimate become available once Dark Falz has been defeated on the previous difficulty. Ultimate mode, however, was not included in the Version 1 release of PSO on Dreamcast.

- **Online Mode**

For online gameplay, instead of having the final boss be defeated in order to select a higher difficulty, there is a specific minimum experience level required to join or create a game. (Players may not join or create an ultimate game unless they have already attained Level 80.) For Blue Burst, level requirements are set not only by difficulty, but by episode as well.

In Blue Burst, the game's main story is broken down into separate missions, accessed via a special desk in the Principals Office or Lab. Each area of the game is divided into three or four missions that must be completed for the story to progress. Items such as weapons and techniques are awarded after certain missions are completed. Other players are able to join the mission at any time, even if the mission is in progress or finished. The final mission in each area is a standard run through the level's areas to the boss battle, essentially 'clearing' the area and unlocking the next one.

- **Challenge Mode**

Challenge mode sets all participants to a set level with set equipment at the beginning of each mission, lasting only until the end of the mission, and requires the team to reach a predefined goal in a series of specially-designed levels that are modified versions of areas seen in normal mode. The aim is to complete the missions in the shortest time possible. New level objects can include laser barriers, buttons, and so on, and sometimes strategically-placed enemies/types of enemies. If

anyone on the team dies, then the challenge is immediately terminated and the team is returned to the Hunter's Guild, so teamwork is essential if the levels are to be completed successfully.

Everyone starts with a 'Scape Doll' revival item in their inventory, enabling them to die once without consequence (the harder the stage, the more scape dolls one receives.) Once all stages have been completed, players are given a rank based on their total time, with "S rank" being the best. If they achieve this in online mode, players are awarded rare weapons which can be customized with an eight-letter name which precedes the weapon's type ("CHOSEN NAME' SABER," "CHOSEN NAME' CLAW", et cetera.) In offline challenge mode, unique rare weapons are awarded instead that have a predetermined name just like regular rare items, but with additional power or attributes. Challenge mode is available for Episodes 1 and 2.

- Battle Mode**

This is a deathmatch mode. In this mode, players are permitted to attack each other. A team may play while being able to attack each other and monsters to fulfill their goals, or they may play one of several predefined sets of battle rules, including goals of meseta, points, or time limitations.

- 1 Player Mode**

Exclusive to Blue Burst, this mode essentially allows Blue Burst players to play the offline mode online, complete with Episode I & II's side story quests. As of July 27, 2006 there are two official 1-player quests available for the Blue Burst-exclusive Episode 4: "Black Paper's Deal" (requires the 'Photon Crystal' item to complete) and "Pioneer Spirit."

In PSO Ep. 1&2, single player gameplay (distinct from PSORB 1-player mode) is available online in regular areas and on quests at the Hunters' Guild, though some quests will not be able to be completed without the support of at least one additional teammate. The complete original storyline, excluding additional online quest backstory, is only available offline. Thus, online and offline gameplay is diverse.

Phantasy Star Online ver. 2

[edit]

Phantasy Star Online ver. 2 is a video game that was released for Dreamcast and PC on July 6, 2001 in Japan, on September 24, 2001 in North America and on March 1, 2002

in Europe. This game was intended to be released as a patch for the initial Dreamcast release, *Phantasy Star Online*.

Phantasy Star Online [edit]

Episode I & II

Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II

is a video game released for the Nintendo GameCube and Xbox in 2002. An online RPG, its focus is

online gameplay with a strong offline storyline, offering diverse online and offline gameplay. Offline mode is available for single player and multiplayer. Multiplayer split-screen mode can be played with up to four players. Playing online on Xbox required an active Xbox Live account.

As of April 1, 2007, the online servers for the GameCube release of Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II have officially been shut down.

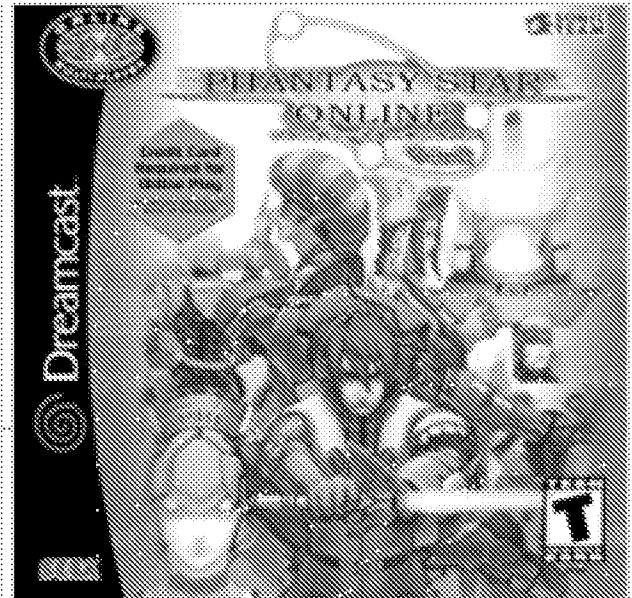
As of April 22, 2008, the online servers for the Xbox release of Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II have officially been shut down.

Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II Plus [edit]

Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II Plus is a video game released for the Nintendo GameCube on November 27, 2003 in Japan and on September 15, 2004 in North America. An online RPG, its focus is online gameplay with a strong offline storyline, offering diverse online and offline gameplay. Offline mode is available for single player and multiplayer. Multiplayer split-screen mode can be played with up to four players, though the framerate and visibility range is much lower than offline single-player and online modes, as is customary, and gameplay is not limited by this.

Improvements/Additions not in Dreamcast and PC Versions of PSO [edit]

This installment of PSO features an entirely new episode that includes five new regions to explore: Temple, Spaceship, Central Control Area (consisting of the Control Area's Jungle, Seaside and



Phantasy Star Online ver.2 Dreamcast boxart

Mountain areas) Seabeds, and Control Tower. (Control Tower is available in online mode and in the offline Episode II Plus version quests.) This installment also adds three new character class/race combinations, many new items, many new creatures, and some added cheat protection. One can also play online with the GameCube if one has a modem or broadband adapter. Data between the previous GameCube version and the Plus version is completely and instantly transferable.

Differences between Phantasy Star Online Ep. I & II and Plus Versions

[\[edit\]](#)

Early in the effort to run unsigned code on the GameCube, people found that when playing PSO and connecting to a server using the Nintendo GameCube Broadband Adapter, a regular PC could emulate a server. After making the connection, data could be streamed back to the Nintendo GameCube. Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II Plus was released to remedy this. The other incentive to getting this version was the inclusion of exclusive content in the disc, while beforehand this data was only available in a downloadable form. Also, the East Tower and West Tower quests for Episode II were added in the Plus version with offline capability. These quests were previously only available online.

- Additions to Phantasy Star Online Episode 1 and 2 Plus**

- The 'Central Dome Fire Swirl' quest is available offline in Episode 1.
- The GameBoy Advance (GBA) download in 'The Fake in Yellow' quest in Episode 1 is now available offline.
- 'Seat of the Heart,' 'East Tower' and 'West Tower' quests are available offline in Episode 2.
- The Episode 2 Challenge Mode is now available offline, originally only available online.

Plot Synopsis

[\[edit\]](#)

- Backstory**

Endless warring on the homeworld of Coral is so devastating to the environment, it becomes uninhabitable. The Alliance of Nations bands together to plan a mass exodus to another planet, eventually deciding on Ragol. They then construct and launch the first of the colonization vessels, Pioneer 1. Hearing favorable results, they follow it with a second vessel, Pioneer 2. When Pioneer 2 arrives, however, they see an enormous explosion on Ragol's surface and find that the colony's entire population has apparently vanished.

• Episode 1

When the citizens on Pioneer 2 observe the explosion on Ragol, the Principal sends down a team of Hunters - the player characters - to the surface to investigate what happened. The investigation takes them through a forest, which is teeming with mutated animals (such as wolves), then to the base of the "Dome" that Pioneer 1's inhabitants lived in. Eventually, the hunters enter the dome and find a dragon. Once the hunters defeat the dragon, they enter a series of caves which go below the Dome, filled with heavily mutated lifeforms. At the end of the caves, the hunters defeat "De Rol Le", a large mutant that is responsible for mutating the animals and lifeforms in the forests and caves by poisoning the water source of the entire planet. At the end of the caves the hunters delve deeper into the planet, to an automated mining complex, which is filled with machines that attack the hunters on sight. After battling through the levels of the mine, the hunters defeat "Vol Opt", a sentient Artificial Intelligence that corrupted and took over the machines in the mines. At the end of the mines, the hunters find an entrance to the ruins of an ancient, living spaceship. Inside the spaceship, the hunters combat slightly-demonic lifeforms. Throughout the entire game the hunters follow the story of Red Ring Rico, a hunter from Pioneer 1 that had followed the same path previously and left various messages of advice. Rico had found the source of the monsters that had destroyed the colony on Ragol, only to be devoured by Dark Falz, a godlike entity which the players defeat in the final battle of the episode, which was the end of the game's single-player mode in the original Dreamcast version.^[1] Ultimate mode was later on in V.2 of PSO and in it one will encounter visual changes which were created to give the player a glimpse of Ragol before the monsters were poisoned and mutated, and the areas were destroyed. Side stories include Kireek (AKA Black Hound) and his Soul Eater. This was an experimental weapon created by Dr. Osto and given to Kireek. However, Kireek was relieved of it by the team of Hunters before he could be completely demonized like Heathcliff Flowen. Dr. Montague was another doctor who focused on developing advances in weapons using experimental methods; however, he was much more successful and the results were less devastating.

• Episode 2

Episode 2 takes place after the ancient spaceship is discovered. The Chief of the Government Lab of Pioneer 2 asks the hunters to go down to Ragol and investigate a secret laboratory that had recently been discovered on Gal Da Val Island. Before leaving on the mission, however, the player characters are required to complete a pair of training simulations. The first simulates a maze of ruins, the second a space station, and both stages feature enemies based on those seen in

Episode 1.

Once the training is complete, the hunters are sent to the planet's surface with the task of finding the security terminals that grant access to the facility. The search is broken up into three stages: a seaside region, a mountain region, and a jungle region, in no particular order. Along the way, the hunters come across a number of data terminals, which contain details about the new enemy creatures that they are fighting as well as several entries by Heathcliff Flowen. A military commander from the Pioneer 1 colony, Heathcliff, was injured while fighting alongside Rico and had apparently become infected by the life form that had turned the local wildlife into monsters. Believing himself to be dying, he admitted his body to the custody of one Dr. Osto for research purposes.

Having deactivated the security terminals, the hunters finally manage to get inside and begin investigating the facility, which is home to its own automated security system as well as a new set of monsters. The investigation turns up more of Heathcliff's entries, including more details on the events that led to the colony's destruction. Rather than warning anybody about the hazard the life form posed, Dr. Osto used samples from Heathcliff's wound to create mutant creatures and other biological weapons, eventually merging Heathcliff's body with an artificial intelligence and allowing it to be consumed by the wound. The result became Olga Flow, the final monster encountered in the game.

Phantasy Star Online Episode III

[\[edit\]](#)


It has been suggested that *Phantasy Star Online Episode III C.A.R.D. Revolution* be merged into this article or section. (Discuss)

Main article: Phantasy Star Online Episode III C.A.R.D. Revolution

Phantasy Star Online Episode IV

[\[edit\]](#)

Episode IV was exclusively designed for PSO: Blue Burst is only available on the Windows operating system. Episode IV features brand new enemies, maps, and items, in addition to those included with previous episodes. The new maps include Crater Routes, Crater Interior, and Subterranean Desert. Like other Blue Burst episodes, the normal mode has a series of plot-driven missions to work through, as well as some exclusive Hunter's Guild quests.

Episode IV is notable for being slightly less difficult than the other chapters of Phantasy Star Online. This is due to the addition of new, easily obtainable weapons and items that drastically boost the player's performance.

Version list

[edit]

Version	Platform	Release Date
Phantasy Star Online Network Trial Edition	Dreamcast	Q3 2000 (Japan)
Phantasy Star Online	Dreamcast	December 21, 2000 (Japan) January 29, 2001 (North America) February 23, 2001 (Europe)
Phantasy Star Online Ver. 2	Dreamcast	June 6, 2001 (Japan) September 24, 2001 (North America) March 1, 2002 (Europe)
Phantasy Star Online Beta	Microsoft Windows	Q4 2001 (Japan)
Phantasy Star Online	Microsoft Windows	December 20, 2001 (Japan) 2002 (Asia)
Phantasy Star Online Demo	Microsoft Windows	December 20, 2001 (Japan) January 2002 (UK) ¹
Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II Trial Edition	Nintendo GameCube	May 2002 (Japan)
Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II (ver 1.0)	Nintendo GameCube	September 12, 2002 (Japan) ²

Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II (ver 1.1)	Nintendo GameCube	October 29, 2002 (North America) November 2002 (Japan) ² March 7, 2003 (Europe) March 14, 2003 (Sweden)
Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II	Xbox	Q1 2003 (Japan) April 15, 2003 (North America) May 23, 2003 (Europe)
Phantasy Star Online Episode III C.A.R.D. Revolution Trial Edition	Nintendo GameCube	June 24, 2003 (Japan)
Phantasy Star Online Episode III C.A.R.D. Revolution	Nintendo GameCube	November 27, 2003 (Japan) March 2, 2004 (North America) June 18, 2004 (Europe) ³
Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II Plus	Nintendo GameCube	27 November 2003 (Japan) 15 September 2004 (North America)
Phantasy Star Online: Blue Burst Beta	Microsoft Windows	May 21, 2003 (Japan) May 10, 2004 (North America/Europe)
Phantasy Star Online: Blue Burst	Microsoft Windows	July 15, 2004 (Japan) June 23, 2005 (North America/Europe)
Phantasy Star Online: Episode IV Beta ⁴	Microsoft Windows	November 2004 (Japan)
Phantasy Star Online: Episode IV ⁴	Microsoft Windows	Q1 2005 (Japan)

¹ Demo included on January issue of PC Gamer (UK.)

² Contained a serious item duplication bug, fixed in ver 1.1 in Japan, and discovered before the North American and European versions were mastered. Owners of the older version have been

able to ask Sonic Team to send them the updated version since November 25, 2002 ^[*?*].

³ The GAME retail group GAME (retailer) had an exclusive deal, allowing them to distribute the game starting June 11, 2004 in the United Kingdom. In other European countries, it was released on a different date, and eventually worldwide.

⁴ Episode IV expansion pack included with the North American and European versions of Blue Burst.

Phantasy Star Online 2

[edit]

A sequel to the highly acclaimed Phantasy Star Online was announced on September 16th 2010. It is slated for a 2011 release in Japan for PC. Sega had recently stirred rumors of a sequel by renewing the URL under just such a name. The announcement of the sequel coincides with the 10th anniversary of the original Phantasy Star Online for the Sega Dreamcast.

Legacy

[edit]

Hiroshi Matsuyama, president of CyberConnect2 and developer of the *.hack* series, cited *Phantasy Star Online* as an influence for the MMORPG world of *.hack*.^[*?*]

References

[edit]

- ↑ http://www.phantasy-star.net/pso/pso.htm^[*?*]
- ↑ IGNPS2 (May 16, 2003). "E3 2003: .hack interview^[*?*]. IGN. http://ps2.ign.co^[*?*] articles/403/403483p2.htm^[*?*]. Retrieved July 1, 2010.

External links

[edit]

- Official *Phantasy Star Online Episode III* Website^[*?*]

- * Disclaimers